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CLAIMS

1. A method of processing images, comprising applying an anisotropic diffusion process to the image, the anisotropic diffusion process being adapted in dependence upon the
5   contrast in the image.

2. A method according to claim 1 wherein a diffusion coefficient in the anisotropic diffusion process is adapted in dependence upon the contrast in the image.

10   3. A method according to claim 2 wherein the diffusion coefficient is calculated from the local contrast in the image.

4. A method according to claim 3 wherein the diffusion coefficient is calculated from an average value of the local contrast in the image.
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5. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 4 further comprising the steps of deriving a Gaussian derivative of the image and applying said anisotropic diffusion process to the SMF image.

20   6. A method of processing images to segment objects in the image from background comprising applying a foveal segmentation algorithm to the image in which areas of the image are assigned to an object if the local contrast is greater than a minimum contrast value, wherein the minimum contrast value is defined with respect to the contrast in the image.
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7. A method according to claim 6 wherein the minimum contrast is calculated from an average value of the local contrast in the image.

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8. A method according to claim 6 or 7 wherein the local contrast is calculated from a weighted sum of the image intensities in the object and in the image. ·

9. A method according to any one of claims 6 to 8 further comprising the steps of
5   deriving a Gaussian derivative of the image and applying said foveal segmentation algorithm to the SMF image.

10. A method according to claim 4, 7 or 8 wherein the average value of the local contrast in the image is calculated over the whole image.

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11. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 5 further comprising sementing the processed image using the foveal segmentation method of any one of claims 6 to 10.

12. A method according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the image is an x-
15   ray image.

13. A method according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the image is a medical image.

20   14. A method according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the image is a mammogram.

15. A method according to claim 13 further comprising the steps of identifying areas of the processed image as representing microcalcifications.

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